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New Chairman of Senate Foreign Panel May Have to Temper Devotion to Reagan

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WASHINGTON—In his official Washington biography, Sen. Richard Lugar quotes a recent book describing him as President Reagan's "main man" on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Now that the Indiana Republican is to be chairman of that committee, the White House couldn't be more pleased.

Sen. Lugar seldom disagrees with the White House on major foreign-policy questions and he makes it a point to deal with any differences privately. Even so, he offers himself a major challenge: He wants to return the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to the preeminent role it played in the 1960s, when J. William Fulbright used it as a platform for attacking a president of his own party on the Vietnam War.



"We need to bring the focus of foreign-policy attention and prestige back to the Foreign Relations Committee," Mr. Lugar says in an interview. Still, he is expected to be more supportive of the Reagan administration than his predecessor, Republican Sen. Charles Percy, who was defeated in his reelection campaign.

Mr. Lugar isn't expected to press the White House, as Mr. Percy did, on matters such as arms control. His views on the U.S.-Soviet relationship and on American aid policies in the Middle East and Central America are consistent with those of the Reagan administration.

'No Blind Devotion'

"He'll be a strong supporter of the administration most of the time, but I assume that it won't be blind devotion," says Sen. Alan Cranston of California, a Democratic member of the committee. "He'll be thinking about the fact that so many chairmen of the committee have been knocked off in reelection fights, so he'll also have that to worry about."

Mr. Lugar, a former Rhodes scholar and mayor of Indianapolis, often is described as intelligent and thorough. But even those who applaud his move up to the committee chairmanship this week worry that he doesn't possess a strong foreign-policy agenda of his own. "If he has a world view, he hasn't given any evi-

dence of it," said one committee staff member. "He's a very thoughtful man, but a technician. He doesn't have very broad international experience. He has been competent but not aggressive."

As he prepares to assume the chairmanship in January, he is giving new attention to Soviet-American affairs. Mr. Lugar, who early this summer met with Oleg Grinevsky, a Soviet negotiator at the Stockholm talks on disarmament, said yesterday he was "encouraged" by indications that the two superpowers were taking steps to increase their talks and, perhaps, their cooperation.

In the past, Mr. Lugar has counseled caution in dealing with Moscow, citing Soviet violations of previous arms agreements. "It may well be possible to find grounds of common agreement with the Soviet Union, but we must be patient about doing so," he said earlier this year. "It takes no talent to sign agreements which favor the Soviets or agreements which we cannot monitor. Agreements which genuinely serve the interests of peace and human rights are more difficult to obtain, and require that our sincerity be matched by our prudence."

Mr. Lugar opposed the Salt II arms-limitation agreement on grounds that it was unequal and the means of verifying compliance were inadequate. He agrees with the Reagan administration's view that U.S. defense preparations had fallen behind those of the Soviet Union, but that now there is a "sound basis" for negotiation between the two sides.

Skeptical of Summits

He is, however, skeptical of calls for regular summit meetings between American and Soviet leaders. "There may come a time when that is a useful thing to do," he says. "I don't think that's arrived yet."

Mr. Lugar is closely identified with European issues, taking a traditional viewpoint of the importance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Earlier this year, he voted with a Senate majority against an amendment that would have reduced American troop strength in Europe unless other NATO nations allowed their defense spending to increase 3% a year after inflation.

As chairman of the subcommittee on European affairs, he has stressed economic issues and the links between economic policy and foreign policy. He is clearly the leader in the Senate in support of continued aid to Turkey.

Mr. Lugar supported the administration in its successful effort to sell Awacs recon-

naissance aircraft to Saudi Arabia. But ordinarily, he is counted among Israel's strongest supporters. In recent months he has come to believe that additional aid to Israel is warranted but that it should be tied to what he described as "substantial reform" of that nation's troubled finances. At the same time, he believes that the U.S. ought to seek friendly ties with moderate Arab nations.

Mr. Lugar will retain his position on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Thus he could play an important role in sculpting American policy in Central America, another area where the Indianan has supported President Reagan. He has been a consistent supporter of aid to El Salvador.

He regards human rights as an "extremely important" element of American foreign policy but resists proposals to link U.S. aid with improvements in human rights policies.

Unlike some Republicans, Mr. Lugar isn't a doctrinaire opponent of foreign aid. "It isn't a gift," he said, "but an extension of foreign policy that we find useful, as opposed to sending people or becoming further involved in situations that could be dangerous for us." However, he sponsored legislation to freeze American funding for the United Nations.